
PART IV: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Section 1: Findings

American Indian tribes have as a common goal the retention, preservation, and enhancement of their cultural heritage. Over the last 500 years Indian cultures have experienced massive destruction, but the tide is changing. Indian tribes are using their limited resources to halt the loss of language, tradition, religion, objects, and sites.

Halting the loss is not enough, however. Indian tribes are living cultures, fundamentally different in character from other components of American society, that can continue and be strengthened only through the perpetuation of their traditions. Tribes, therefore are re-introducing ceremonies, teaching languages, and seeking the return and culturally appropriate treatment of tribal objects and the remains of their ancestors.

These activities are not peripheral to tribal life; they are basic to healthy contemporary tribal societies. From a tribal perspective, the "Keepers of the Treasures" hold not only the keys to the tribal past, but the keys to the tribal future.

The retention, preservation, and enhancement of the cultural heritage of American Indian tribes requires adequate and stable funding from multiple sources. As important, however, is the development of a comprehensive policy within which financial and technical assistance can be provided to tribes in a manner that respects and reinforces tribal values. The findings and recommendations that follow address both funding and policy needs.

1. Indian tribes see the preservation of their cultural heritage as basic to healthy contemporary societies. Cultural preservation activities that revive and enhance traditions also build self-esteem, which strengthens community resistance to social problems such as alcoholism and drug abuse. Cultural preservation can support the aged and spark in the youth new community awareness and pride in the knowledge of the elders.

There is no comprehensive Federal program designed to assist Indian tribes in preserving their cultural heritage although several specialized program exist. Other than the current appropriation of \$500,000 from the Historic Preservation Fund, no Federal assistance program is directed specifically to all aspects of the preservation of the cultural heritage of American Indians. In order to compete for Federal funds for preservation, tribes must exercise unusual ingenuity, describing cultural heritage projects in terms that meet the priorities of granting agencies but may have little to do with tribal preservation concerns. The Kodiak Area Native Association received a grant from the Administration for Native Americans (Department of Health and Human Services) to reconstruct a traditional style ceremonial meeting house because it was able to convince the agency that conducting traditional ceremonies and dances in the appropriate setting raised self-esteem and community pride, thus improving the health of the community.



Children on the Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation put on animal masks to act out legends as part of tribal efforts to retain the Hupa language. (American Folklife Center photograph by Lee Davis)

***Kodiak and the Department of Health and Human Services -
Rebuilding Barabaras and Self-Esteem***

We got a grant from the Department of Health and Human Services for a Traditional Healing Project. I'd like to emphasize that there are not many programs that are earmarked for tribal preservation. Just because it doesn't have preservation or history written on it doesn't mean you can't use it. We all know that cultural heritage is linked closely with self-esteem, and self-esteem is a basic part of being a healthy individual. So you can link this into a health program; in this case it was a program to fight drug and alcohol abuse. We convinced the Department of Health and Human Services that by rebuilding barabaras [large communal sod and wood frame structures] in each village we could recreate the traditional center of social and religious life and begin holding support group meetings in that context. We held dancing events, and it is amazing, it is so much better in the barabara than the ones we held in the high school gym. It has so much more meaning in the barabara, a tangible reminder of the past in the village that had been stripped [of its traditional buildings].

Rick Knecht, Kodiak Area Native Association

2. Indian tribes have developed a wide range of cultural preservation programs within their governments as a tool to meet tribal goals, but lack the adequate resources to make these programs effective. The perpetuation of tribal culture has traditionally been the responsibility of tribal elders. Tribal elders who possess traditional knowledge are rapidly passing on, often without having had the opportunity to share their knowledge and skills with younger generations. Tribal officials recognize that such opportunities can be provided through historic preservation programs developed in accordance with tribal standards and values.

The vast majority of tribal preservation activities are supported totally or in large part by tribal funds. As reported in **PART III**, tribal governments provided financial support to all preservation activities (cultural committees, museums/cultural centers, curation programs, language programs, archives, training programs, survey efforts, and the tribe's work with State and Federal agencies). Tribes reported receiving more funds from tribal governments than from any other source for every preservation activity except for language programs, which received important support from the Department of Education. Tribal budgets are insufficient to meet the need for preservation programs in the face of significant competing priorities.

3. Language is central to preserving tribal cultural heritage and many American Indian languages are in serious risk of being lost. Language is one of the most obvious characteristics by which one culture distinguishes itself from another. Loss of the native language affects Indian communities in all aspects of life. It means a decline in their ability to pass on oral tradition, to



A Makah youth performs a traditional dance at Neah Bay in preparation for the annual Makah Days celebration, held every year since 1926. Such celebrations provide opportunities to pass on tribal traditions and to share them with visitors. (Makah Culture and Research Center photograph)

perform ceremonies necessary for community well-being, and to understand the significance of the landscape and the tribal world view through which it is interpreted.

There are no Federal programs specifically encharged with the preservation and continued use of American Indian languages. Although Department of Education funds are used by tribes for this purpose, acquiring these funds often requires a tribe to apply standards that are only marginally relevant to the interests of language preservation, and to be competitive in doing so. For example, the Makah Nation has received Title IV funds from the Department of Education for language preservation largely because they are able to document that if Makah children learn the Makah language, they also learn English better, thus meeting a prime objective of the Title IV program.

4. Effective tribal participation in the national historic preservation program must be based on recognition of tribal sovereignty and respect for tribal cultural values. From the tribes' point of view, several characteristics of the present national historic preservation program seriously impede full tribal participation.

- o Current laws, regulations, policies and programs seem to be based on an assumption that the scientific value of Indian human remains is equal to, or transcends, the spiritual and emotional value attached by Indian people to proper treatment of the dead. Human remains, indeed, are important scientific and historical "documents," but, first and foremost, they are **human** remains and this value must take precedence.
- o Laws, regulations, policies and programs seem to be based on an assumption that all results of publicly funded activities must become publicly available information. Publicly funded activities on tribal lands or on ancestral lands off reservations may concern or yield information about matters that within tribal contexts are highly restricted. Public access to such information erodes the tribal context in which the information has its cultural and sometimes religious significance.
- o Laws, regulations, policies and programs seem to be based on an assumption that tribal programs for interpretation and conservation of tribal objects and information must conform to the standards and approaches of non-tribal preservation professions. There are situations in which the tribal cultural values lead to contrary interpretation and conservation approaches.

Assisting Indian tribes, or any indigenous cultures, to preserve their cultural heritage requires a recognition that standard approaches and techniques must be modified to function in a tribal or traditional setting. Because American Indian tribal cultures are a living heritage, where past meets present in daily life, they can be protected only by providing for their expression and transmission according to tribal values and standards.

Gaining the participation of Indian tribes as full partners in the national historic preservation movement, without undermining the basic goal of achieving healthy contemporary tribal societies, requires recognition of tribal sovereignty and resolution of key issues discussed in **PART I** of this report. These key issues are: 1) the treatment of human remains, 2) clarifying the nature of professional standards in tribal programs, and 3) acknowledging that some cultural information cannot become public. The national historic preservation program has to be sufficiently flexible to accommodate such differences when they arise.

5. Tribal cultural preservation goals may be advanced through adaptation of standard non-tribal preservation methods and techniques and by the substantive participation by and training of tribal members in preservation-related activities. Preservation of the cultural heritage of Indian tribes can be enhanced by training of tribal members in preservation disciplines. These open new aspects of knowledge to tribes interested in researching their past using archeological and anthropological methods or in caring for tribal objects using modern curation techniques. These disciplines, however, are based on the cultural values of non-tribal society and often will be adapted by Indian peoples to conform to their own cultural beliefs and standards. The Federal government has done little to facilitate this adaptation and as a result some tribes like the Kootenai now actively reject the practice of certain preservation disciplines.

Many tribes like the Ak-Chin, Colorado River, Zuni, and Yakima (quoted in **PART I** of this report) understand that the results of archeological and anthropological research may have long-lasting beneficial effects. They and other tribes, however, want to ensure that research priorities serve tribal goals, that research is carried out in a culturally sensitive manner by or with the assistance of tribal members, and that research results are made available to the tribe in forms that are usable to them.

Section 2: Recommendations

The Preservation and Retention of the American Indian Way of Life.

1. The American people and their government should affirm as a national policy that the historical and cultural foundations of American Indian tribal cultures should be preserved and maintained as a vital part of our community life and development. A national American Indian cultural heritage policy should be developed and adopted after broad consultation with Indian peoples and other interested parties. This policy should recognize the unique role that the continuity of cultural tradition plays in contemporary tribal society and its link to the well-being of Indian tribes in the present and future.



Stickball, a traditional Choctaw ball game, is played each year at the Choctaw's summer festivals. Except that players no longer wear the traditional waist cloth and horse-hair tail, the game has changed little over the years. (Photograph by Carole Thompson)

2. The national American Indian cultural heritage policy should recognize that programs to preserve the cultural heritage of Indian tribes differ in character from other American preservation programs. Federal agencies, State and local governments, museums, foundations, universities, and arts and humanities institutions that assist tribal preservation programs must recognize that basic program goals, standards, and approaches must be adjusted to accommodate the unique needs of grant recipients and program administrators in different cultures.

3. Federal policy should encourage agencies that provide grants for museum, historic preservation, arts, humanities, education, and research projects to give reasonable priority to proposals for projects carried out by or in cooperation with Indian tribes.

4. Federal policy should require Federal agencies, and encourage State and local governments, to ensure that Indian tribes are involved to the maximum extent feasible in decisions that affect properties of cultural importance to them. Agencies that own or manage lands, that carry out or assist development, that license or permit land-use projects, and that review the environmental and historic preservation impacts of such projects should establish systems to ensure culturally appropriate identification and protection of such properties in consultation with tribal cultural authorities.

5. Federal policy should encourage State and local governments to enact laws and ordinances providing for the identification and protection of properties of significance to Indian tribes in order to protect such properties from the effects of land use and development and from looting and vandalism.

6. Federal policy should encourage the accurate representation of the cultural values, languages, and histories of Indian tribes in the public schools and in other educational and interpretative programs.

Preserving American Indian Languages

7. Federal policy should recognize the central importance of language in maintaining the integrity of Indian tribal traditions and the tribal sense of identity and well-being. National efforts to assist tribes to preserve and use their native languages and oral traditions should be established in conjunction with the amendment of the National Historic Preservation Act recommended below. These efforts should recognize the importance not only of preserving and using language *per se*, but also the traditions and cultural practices expressed through American Indian languages.

Participation in the National Historic Preservation Program

8. As part of developing a consistent American Indian cultural heritage policy, a national approach should be developed regarding the exhumation, retention, display, study, repatriation, and appropriate cultural treatment of human remains, funerary artifacts, and sacred artifacts. This policy must be developed in consultation with Indian tribes and other interested parties and must be implemented in a timely fashion by statute, regulations, standards and guidelines.

9. Tribal needs for confidentiality of certain kinds of information should be respected. Federal agencies, State Historic Preservation Offices, other State agencies and local governments, universities, museums, and the public must become aware of and accommodate the importance and sensitivity ascribed by Indian tribes to certain kinds of information. Such information, usually associated with sacred ceremonies, oral traditions, and the locations of places associated with ceremonies and traditions, is often traditionally managed and transmitted only by certain individuals qualified by title, learning, kinship, or other means within tribes. The maintenance of confidentiality may be essential to the preservation of ancestral information management systems, and thus must be considered in the national American Indian cultural heritage policy.

Tribal Participation in the Preservation Disciplines

10. Federal policy should provide for the appropriate involvement of Indian tribes in Federally-assisted preservation research on tribal lands and on ancestral lands off reservations. Ideally, involvement should be established for all stages of research, from research design, implementation (including provision for training as appropriate), analysis, interpretation, conclusions, and recommendations.

11. Toward the achievement of tribal participation in preservation activities, it may be desirable to consider chartering the establishment of a national private organization to promote and assist in the preservation of the cultural heritage of Indian tribes. Such an organization might be patterned after the Congressionally-chartered National Trust for Historic Preservation. National private organizations of this kind have been successful in representing and advocating preservation issues and needs. A national private organization chartered to promote and assist in the preservation of the cultural heritage of Indian tribes should be created only after broad consultation with Indian peoples and should be designed to meet their needs.



Holy Fellowship Episcopal Church is a typical example of mission posts built on Indian reservations in the late nineteenth century. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places because of the role it played in the conversion of the Yankton Sioux to Christianity. (South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office photograph)

12. National programs for training of tribal members in preservation-related disciplines should be developed. These programs should examine and adapt existing professional standards and guidelines as necessary to accommodate the cultural values of Indian tribes in carrying out their preservation activities. Training programs for tribal members in preservation related disciplines must recognize and respect traditional knowledge and skills gained or conferred outside colleges, universities and professional institutions.

Establishing and Developing Tribal Preservation Programs

13. The National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470) should be amended to establish a separate title authorizing programs, policies and procedures for tribal heritage preservation and for financial support as part of the annual appropriations process. At the present time, based on information assembled in this report, an annual funding level in the five to ten million dollar range with discretionary matching requirements seems appropriate. Such tribal heritage programs should provide for the activities described in the recommendations in this report. This funding should be linked to a requirement that the National Park Service re-assess tribal funding needs after a period of 5 years.

Section 3: Conclusions

The recommendations offered above, although developed through independent study, are consistent with policy trends that have been in existence for more than a decade. The *American Indian Policy Review Commission: Final Report* submitted to Congress on May 17, 1977, contained a variety of recommendations for the development, administration, review, and funding of tribal cultural programs in the Smithsonian Institution, the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities, the Library of Congress, Federal agencies, universities, and public schools.²¹

From a broader perspective, policy trends have been toward the protection and preservation of community life and traditional lifeways on national and international levels. In the 1980 amendments to the National Historic Preservation Act, it was found that "the historical and cultural foundations of the Nation should be preserved as a living part of our community life and development in order to give a sense of orientation to the American people (16 U.S.C. 470, Section 1(b)(2))." The 1980 amendments to the Act also directed the National Park Service and the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress to study means of "preserving and conserving the intangible elements of our cultural

²¹ American Indian Policy Review Commission, *American Indian Policy Review Commission: Final Report*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office), Volume 1, 1977: p. 44-45.

heritage such as arts, skills, folklife and folkways" and to recommend ways to "preserve, conserve, and encourage the continuation of the diverse traditional prehistoric, historic, ethnic, and folk cultural traditions that underlie and are a living expression of our American heritage (Section 502)."

The *Cultural Conservation* report, prepared in response to Section 502 of the Act, was transmitted to Congress and the President by Secretary of the Interior James Watt, in 1983.²² The report recommended that the President and the Congress commit the United States to a national effort at the Federal, State, and local levels to protect community life and values and related traditional lifeways.

The *Cultural Conservation* report further recommended that the National Park Service use its authorities to: 1) develop in cooperation with appropriate agencies and organizations a program for the survey and documentation of American folklife and related traditional lifeways; 2) provide funds to States and community groups, organizations, and institutions for folklife survey and documentation, using provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act for grants to States and to Native American, ethnic, and minority groups; 3) coordinate development of national policies and guidelines for protecting the full array of cultural resources; and, 4) give added priority to living traditions of communities associated with national parks in the planning, operation, and interpretation of the National Park system.

The First World Conference on Cultural Parks was held at Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado, in 1984. The recommendations of the Conference stressed the need to protect and preserve traditional cultural lifeways including "intangible culture, which is as much a part of the world's heritage as the unique historic and natural properties." The report also noted the need to "identify sites, cultures and ecosystems threatened with degradation or loss. . . and . . . also take the actions needed to protect and preserve such properties and ecosystems, as well as permit indigenous peoples to maintain their lifeways."²³

Over the last several years, the National Park Service has undertaken a special effort to adjust its administration of Historic Preservation Fund grant programs as they apply to the Freely Associated States of Micronesia. The National Park Service has strived to recognize that these new nations have special needs, not unlike those of Indian tribes, to address not only historic properties, *per se*, but the broad social and cultural contexts from which such properties derive their

²² *Cultural Conservation: The Protection of Cultural Heritage in the United States*, Coordinated by Ormond H. Loomis, Publications of the American Folklife Center, No. 10, (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress), 1983.

²³ *International Perspectives on Cultural Parks: Proceedings of the First World Conference, Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado, 1984*, Colorado Historical Society with the U.S. National Park Service, (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service), January 1989: p. 402.



A Wainwright Eskimo girl dances in a summer parka to the beat of Eskimo drums. The drums are made from walrus stomach and drift wood. (Alaska Native Heritage Park, Inc. photograph by Chris Arend. The Alaska Native Heritage Park, Inc. is a corporation dedicated to discovering and celebrating Alaska's Eskimo, Indian, and Aleut traditions.)



Plants like Sxwa'/sem, or soapberry bush, are valued by the Lummi for many uses. (Photograph by Al S. Johnnie reprinted with permission)

significance. A concern for both historic properties and cultural tradition has emerged clearly from the Micronesian Resources Study authorized by Public Law 99-658 and undertaken by the National Park Service pursuant to Public Law 100-102. The final report of this study is now in preparation.

Most recently, the Library of Congress' American Folklife Center held a national conference, "Cultural Conservation: Reconfiguring the Cultural Mission," on May 16-19, 1990. Folklorists, folklife specialists, anthropologists, archeologists, naturalists, planners, design specialists, educators, government officials, and representatives from Indian tribes met to discuss current efforts to preserve and enhance our nation's cultural heritage and to make recommendations for the future. The recommendations from the conference, in draft form as this report goes to print, take a holistic approach to the conservation, preservation and enhancement of the nation's cultural and natural heritage. This holistic approach echoes perspectives on cultural preservation as described in this report by "the people themselves."

In conclusion, it is time for Indian tribes to be afforded the opportunity to participate fully in the national historic preservation program on terms that respect their cultural values and traditions as well as their status as sovereign nations. Doing this will require relatively modest funding, but it will also require adjustment in the way we look at historic preservation. To be responsive to the needs of Indian tribes the Federal government needs to shift from a focus on specific, clearly definable historic properties to a concern for the cultural environment as a whole, including both historic properties and cultural traditions, and to adjust Federal procedures, standards, and guidelines accordingly.

This shift in focus is necessary for more than accommodating the needs of Indian tribes. As prior studies like the 1983 *Cultural Conservation* report have suggested, it is the next logical step in the evolution of the national historic preservation program as a whole.



Pete Dyer, a Choctaw medicine man, is also a rainmaker.
(Photograph by Carole Thompson)